

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SSM-03 EUR-12 CU-04 IO-13  
SCS-06 CA-01 SY-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
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R 181529Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 714  
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 843

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM SCUL IS  
SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON PROTESTANT CONCERN  
OVER ANTI-PROSELYTIZING LAW

REF.: TEL AVIV 662

1. EMBOFF CALLED ON JEHONATHAN PRATO, DIRECTOR, CHURCH  
RELATIONS DIVISION IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO  
DISCUSS AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONCERN AND PROBLEM OF INTER-  
NATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE ISRAEL ANTI-PROSELYTIZING LAW  
PASSED DECEMBER 27. (REFTEL) PRATO TRIED TO MINIMIZE  
LIKELIHOOD OF STRONG INTERNATIONAL REACTION AND THOUGHT  
THAT FEARS OF UNITED CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (UCC) WERE UNWARRANTED.  
BOTH THE GOI AND THE ISRAELI COURTS WOULD CONTINUE TO  
ASSURE THE PROTECTION AND NORMAL FUNCTIONS OF THE VARIOUS  
CHURCH GROUPS, SINCE THE LAW APPLIED ONLY TO SPECIFIC  
ACTS OF BRIBERY IN CONNECTION WITH CONVERSATIONS. THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL, ON THE BASIS OF A QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED  
BY THE UNITED CHRISTIAN COUNCIL, WOULD ISSUE A RULING  
NARROWING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE LAW.

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2. PRATO ALSO SAID THAT CONCERN OVER POTENTIAL INTER-  
NATIONAL REACTIONS APPEARS EXAGGERATED AND NOTED THAT  
"MAJOR US EVANGELICAL GROUPS" WERE PLANNING AN INTER-  
NATIONAL CONGRESS FOR PEACE IN JERUSALEM, JANUARY 31  
TO FEBRUARY 2, WHICH WILL BE ADDRESSED BY THE PRIME  
MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS  
AFFAIRS AND TEDDY KOLLEK.

3. RESPONDING TO EMBOFF QUESTIONS ABOUT UCC COMPLAINT THAT IN CONFLICTS WITH MILITANT JEWISH RELIGIOUS GROUPS, CHRISTIAN MISSIONS FELT INADEQUATELY PROTECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO A BOMBING INCIDENT ON BAPTIST MISSION PREMISES IN JERUSALEM, PRATO SAID THAT MAYOR KOLLEK HAD PERSONNALLY LOOKED INTO THE MATTER AND THAT THE CITY HAD PAID FOR ALL DAMAGES AND REPAIRS OF PREMISES.

4. PRATO FURTHER NOTED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN IN HIS TALKS THIS MONTH WITH THE POPE HAD REPORTEDLY ASSURED HIS HOLINESS OF THE LIMITED INTENT OF THE LAW AND THAT IT WOULD NOT AFFECT ANY ACTIVITIES OR RIGHTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. SIMILAR ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO AND REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED BY LATIN PATRIARCH KALDANY AND THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE MSGR WILLIAM THAREW.

5. DESPITE PRATO'S EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE LAW, THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY--PARTICULARLY THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES--REMAINS FAR FROM REASSURED. THE GROUP AWAITS A REPLY FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO ITS QUESTIONNAIRE AS WELL AS EXPLANATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT LEADERS. IN THE MEANTIME THE GROUP WHICH HAD CALLED ON AMBASSADOR LEWIS, PUBLICIZED ITS MEETING WITH HIM IN THE PRESS AND QUOTED HIM AS HAVING ASSURED THEM OF HIS STRONG SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT AS WELL AS HIS CONCERN

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OVER INTERNATIONAL REACTION. YEDIOT IN AN EDITORIAL CRITICIZED THE AMBASSADOR FOR "INTERFERRING IN INTERNAL ISRAELI AFFAIRS." THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, BEING MORE CONCERNED WITH ITS STATUS AND THE QUESTION OF THE CONTROL OF HOLY PLACES, APPEARS PRESENTLY LESS INCLINED THAN PROTESTANT GROUPS TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVE IN ATTACKING THE LAW.

6. THE DCM HAS PROTESTED TO MR PAUL SWARR, GENERAL SECRETARY, THE UNITED CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN ISRAEL, AGAINST THE ACTIONS OF THE GROUP IN CONTACTING THE PRESS FOLLOWING THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING. IN APOLOGIZING FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES (OF WHICH HE, AS GROUP LEADER, CLAIMED IGNORANCE), SWARR (A) AGREED IT HAD BEEN CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT MEETING WAS CONFIDENTIAL, (B) ADMITTED THAT CONTRARY TO HAARETZ ACCOUNT OF MEETING, AMBASSADOR HAD NOT COMMITTEE HIMSELF TO RAISING ISSUE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OR FOREIGN MINISTER, (C) VOLUNTEERED TO ATTEMPT TO GAIN AGREEMENT FROM GROUP THAT THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER CONTACTS WITH PRESS CONCERNING MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR. LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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